

## Common Reactions to Trauma – Adults

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Below you will find some reactions and symptoms that are often experienced by individuals who have been through a trauma. These symptoms reflect your body's way of trying to cope and adjust to what has happened.

### Physical:

- Pounding
- Heart
- Sweating
- Flushed
- Shortness of Breath/Hyperventilation
- Chest Pains
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Upset stomach/Vomiting
- Loss of appetite or craving junk food
- Muscle tremors
- Loss of coordination
- Frequent headaches or migraines
- Muscle soreness
- Rapid uncontrolled speech
- Difficulty sitting or relaxing
- Dizzy or fainting
- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Frequent need to urinate
- Grinding of teeth
- Inability to shake a cold
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Insomnia/difficulty sleeping, nightmares
- Feeling of exhaustion and fatigue
- Change in sexual functioning or desire
- Missed menstrual cycle

## Thoughts and Attitudes:

- Disbelief
- Horror
- Confusion
- Poor concentration
- Spaciness
- Poor decision making abilities
- Disorientation
- Poor memory
- Poor attention (not retaining information)
- Preoccupied with trauma memories
- Preoccupation with health
- Time distortion (time slows down or speeds up)
- Increased rigidity and closed thinking (inflexibility)
- Feeling omnipotent (unrealistic appraisal of situation)
- Cynicism or negativism
- Absolute thinking (I will never; This always)
- Negative/Critical judgements against self (I am such a failure)
- Hindsight thinking (If only; Why didn't)

## Emotions:

- Numb/Emotionally shut down
- Shocked
- Anxious
- Agitated
- Panicked or fearful (specific or general)
- Overwhelmed
- Anger (at self, others, God)
- Mood swings
- Troubling dreams
- Sad
- Depression
- Helpless or inadequate feelings
- Sense of guilt
- Loss of sense of humor
- Less able to cope with new or continued emotional stress

## **Relationships:**

- Irritability
- Easily frustrated
- Insensitivity
- Loss of interest in others
- Isolating/Distancing (Avoiding fellowship) Insecurity
- Avoidance of intimacy
- Suspicious
- Clingy Discord/Arguments
- Critical of others
- Scapegoating (a focal point for suppressed anger and depression)
- Hypersensitivity (feelings easily hurt)

## **Behaviors:**

- Losing or misplacing things
- Easily startled or hyper alert to environment
- Tearful
- Excessive activity (or hyperactivity)
- Excessive talking
- Starts things but doesn't finish

## **Avoidance behaviors:**

- Use of alcohol to numb
- Use of drugs (prescription or not) to numb
- Abandonment of fun activities
- Overly involved in work
- Desire to leave field
- Less productive

## **Risky/Self-destructive behaviors:**

- Increased smoking
- Excessive spending
- Accident prone
- Sexual immorality

## Meaning/Ministry:

- Increasingly busy with task orientation
- Loss of sense of purpose/role
- Less meaning in ministry
- Disappointment with God
- Loss of motivation
- Questioning former beliefs

## Conclusions:

Each person is unique in how they respond to a trauma, so your response may not be the same as another person who has gone through the same or a similar experience.

Remember that it takes time to heal.

After you work through these reactions, you will come to a new place in your life that is characterized by deeper understanding, healthy conclusions, resilience, deeper trust, and an expanded world view. You will be one who has suffered and yet thrived.

Even after many of the memories are gone and you are feeling much better, there may still be things which "trigger" these symptoms and painful memories.

If these symptoms become very intense and persist over a long period of time, or if you are noticing impairment in your ministry or relationships, you may want to consider talking with a counselor who specializes in trauma. This does not mean that you are crazy, only that you need some help.

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